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AUTHOR O'Reily, Robert C.
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ABSTRACT

The profession of educational administration may find its best route to a unified improvement by way of increasing reflective thought and analysis of the work, coupled with the recognition of real-life politics that makes negotiation and compromise an absolutely essential part of that development. Data were generated from a survey that was extended to three different groups of professional educators, soliciting some of their views on certification. An analytical discussion leads to final questions about the relationship between legal controls over certification and levels of quality in the performance of administrative tasks in schools. Findings indicated (1) there is substantial diversity in regulating the issue of certification; (2) educators and state regulators agree that state-controlled, approved program systems provide the best academic arrangement for preparing school administrators; (3) state diversity represents strong local control; and (4) strong legal control of certification is at variance with the sentiment of educators. (7 references) (SI)

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The Instability of Certification for Educational Administration

by

Robert C. O'Reilly, Professor
Department of Educational Administration and Supervision
University of Nebraska at Omaha
(402/554-3441)

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The identification of the competencies that are necessary to perform in any given work setting, in any given occupation is a set of open issues. Although it may be true that a majority of persons who work in the occupation or who are clients of the occupation have a general consensus on what it takes to be "really good" in that line of work, certainty is not present. Lack of that certainty keeps the issue alive, as an item to be discussed. In addition, personal experiences that have involved both high success and high failure may bias the discussion, as each person tends to integrate those personal experiences into an analysis of what is needed.

This author recently (1989) toured the Waterford and Celtic crystal factories in Ireland and heard the specifications for such job tasks (craft

level) as blowers, cutters, and engravers. At the Waterford, employees serve a three year apprenticeship with a cutter before they are allowed to perform the work unsupervised and their test at the end of the three years is to produce a vase up to established quality standards. So, it is time and test. For engravers, the process is similar, but the time is ten years before recognition as an unsupervised engraver can occur. At the Celtic, the work is different and so are the designations. Selection is important and only persons who have graduated with honors from the appropriate technical school need apply (approved program system). Those who are hired are designated as cutters and are eligible for designation as a master cutter after three years with work up to acceptable quality standards.

In these instances, the employers set the standards for "certification" of competence. Different, but equally distinctive measures of competence prevail in such professional areas as architecture, accounting, engineering, and law. None of these occupational categories, however, also entail the condition of public employment that prevails in education.

Licensure and certification are attempts to assure clients of some minimum level of competence. Such documents are issued in various ways for different kinds of occupations; however, they all share the common intent to provide assurance and security for clients. They are issued only upon proof, upon evidence that authentic programs have been completed, that scores on tests have been at some minimum level of acceptability, or other premises indicating that it is appropriate to issue a credential testifying to the competence of the holder. For persons in education, the certificate is a necessary preliminary to entering the job applicant pool, whether it be teacher, librarian, administrator, or other.

Certificates for educators have been conceptually developed through the legal obligation of each state to be responsible for the education of children in that state. Departments of education issue those certificates, so in a sense they are legal documents that attest to job proficiency. They are gross signals to boards of education in which the very best performer and the very poorest performer -- within the range of acceptability for a certificate -- have identical certificates. It is reasonable, then, to pursue opportunities and ideas which have as their goal the refinement of the qualifications for certificates. Historically, this has led the profession of education through a system for certification which has featured incremental difficulty of attainment, with the 1990 certificate -- in any state -- much more difficult to attain than, say, what could be gotten five decades ago in 1940. Mostly, that has been an increase in the academic background of the applicants for certificates until in 1990 fifty states require at least a bachelors degree as a base for the application for the certificate (1).

Beyond that, there is substantial variation, testimony to the fact that citizens in different states see quite different ways to identify what is necessary (and desirable) for beginning teachers. Not incidentally, it should be pointed out that the idea of certification has long had the support of the NEA and the AFT; and the same is true for the associations for administrators, the AASA, the NAESP, the NASSP, and others. Within the profession, and in the various subgroups that compose the entire education profession, the certificate has become the credential of minimum competence. Although there is internal acceptance of the idea of certification, there is dispute about who should have the power to issue -- or withhold or revoke -- certificates. When that internal dispute is

coupled with the willingness of legislatures to engage in direct control over questions of both substance and procedures for certification, a variety of systems for certification becomes quite predictable.

No one contends that no preparation is an advantage; yet, there is a notable lack of agreement about how the highest quality school administrator may be found. Discussion of the most suitable preparation programs for school administration is not a new topic. In the early 1960s, Davies presented the case for internships as a vital part of the preparation (2). Only a few years later, Haskew presented his views on the preparation of school administrators, starting with careful selection and including one year as a full time student pursuing skills in analysis, decision making, and interpersonal relations (3).

The 1970s saw a flurry of activity as professors and practitioners of educational administration discussed the elements that could be used to identify competency. The UCEA was publishing on this topic; the NASSP was in the developmental phase of the assessment center idea; the NAESP was moving toward its publication of guidelines for M.S. and Ed.S. programs for elementary and middle school principals; the AASA was planning for the second edition of its superintendent career development series.

Certification in the education arena is a balance of tension in the political world, broadly construed. Oklahoma is a good example of one state that became active, incorporating the professional format of the 1970s into HB 1706, enacted in 1970. That bill incorporated several ideas thought to lead to improved schools and came as that state was riding the economic crest of the oil boom. It stipulated that each of the discrete areas for certification of educators would be subject to examination, and tests which had to be "passed" were written. This part of the

certification process applied to elementary principals, secondary principals, and superintendents (4).

In the sense that a certificate is supposed to be a predictor of performance effectiveness, various researchers have listed the considerations and behaviors that are evident in successful administrators. That is, working backward from observed effectiveness of principals, Bossert, et. al. (1982) listed seven characteristics (5):

1. coherence to the school's instructional program
2. conceptualization of instructional goals
3. advocating high academic standards
4. staying informed on policies and problems
5. frequent visits to classrooms
6. creating incentives for learning
7. maintaining student discipline.

At about the same time, Murphy, et. al. (1987) identified a set of eight functions as seen in effective principals (6):

1. establishing goals and policy for the school
2. promoting standards and expectations
3. assessing student performance
4. protecting time for instruction
5. knowledge of curriculum and instructional strategies
6. promoting curriculum articulation
7. supporting instructional improvements
8. accomplishing supervision and evaluation.

It may be less difficult to identify the work characteristics seen in successful administrators as they perform on-the-job than it is to translate that information into programs for the preparation of administrators, as taught by professors. Likewise, it may be equally difficult to provide assurances of those observed competencies through certificates that are issued upon completing programs of graduate study, paper and pencil tests, extended simulations, apprenticeships, or any other device. It is necessary that the profession of educational administration continue to pursue new and better ways to identify/assure job competence,

but also to accept with appropriate humility the difficulty of creating from research kinds of programs that have highest certainty and least deficiency. Most of the discussions about what needs to be learned and how it should be taught neglect the consideration of the "wisdom of elders" as a necessary part of developing new and better administrators. It may become a necessary and integral component.

Research

This is an essay about workers and quality in the workforce, made specific to educational administration. It rests upon data from two sources. First, data were generated from a survey that was extended to three different groups of professional educators, soliciting some of their views of certification (See Appendix A). Those respondents provided information generated out of experience. Second, a review of current certification requirements in (six) selected states provided a legal backdrop. An analytical discussion followed those two separate but related bits of data, leading to final questions about the relationship between legal controls over certification and levels of quality in the performance of administrative tasks in schools.

The survey was returned by a total of seventy-one professional educators in three discrete groups (Table 1). Questions were ranked on a five-point scale ranging from strong agreement [5] to strong disagreement [1]. Examination of the table reveals substantial coordinated disagreement that teacher certification test scores should be linked to salary and that teacher supply and demand should dictate an "elastic" policy for issuance for certificates. Strong unified support emerged for the approved program system for the issuance of certificates and for the concept that teachers

Table 1
Views on Certification,
Three Population Groups

Questions	Responses		
	1 (N = 20)	2 (N = 37)	3 (N = 14)
1. The present system of certification in Nebraska (an approved program system), based upon cooperation between colleges of education and the state department of education, is an excellent program for preparing teachers.	3.55	3.59	3.72
2. Teachers should be in charge of teacher certification.	3.65	3.36	2.29
3. State (legal) agencies should be in charge of teacher certification.	2.85	2.75	3.07
4. Teacher certification should be attached to supply and demand. That is, when teachers are in short supply, entry standards should be reduced so that there can be a "teacher" in every classroom.	1.30	1.59	2.64
5. Teachers are worthy of the public trust to police their own group.	3.70	3.91	4.21
6. Teachers are, for example and in comparison, as trustworthy as are lawyers (who police their own group).	4.15	4.02	2.79
7. Certification should be by a national board, with that certificate valid in every state.	3.75	3.86	2.29
8. National certification should be issued only after successful completion of a national teacher examination.	2.95	2.78	2.00
9. Teacher salaries should be linked to scores on a teacher certification examination; i.e., the better the score, the higher the salary.	1.55	1.37	2.00
10. The National Science Teachers Association (for example) should be the agency to identify and certificate persons qualified to teach science.	3.00	2.75	1.79

1 = beginning students in an M.S. program in Educ. Administration, UNO
2 = completing students in an M.S. program in Educ. Administration, UNO
3 = professors of educational administration, University of Nebraska.

are worthy of public trust to police their own group. Of the ten statements, only two received aggregated ratings of agreement at a rating level above 4.0 by any of the three groups and both (items 5 and 6) ascribe a high level of trustworthiness to educators.

To provide information about a separate but obviously related condition, the regulations (legal and quasi-legal) for administrator certification were examined from six selected states. This material provides for a comparison of perceived conditions that bear upon certification to the legal rules that actually govern eligibility. The states were selected for geographical distribution in the nation and they were California, Nevada, Kansas, Nebraska, Georgia, and Massachusetts. The NASDTEC manual (7) is a summarized review of the rules and regulations of each state, developed from antecedent legislation. Being a summary, some small but important details may have been omitted, and being issued in 1988 means that current legislation bearing upon certification will not be considered in this paper. It is clear from the accompanying table that the rules governing the issuance of certificates for school administration do not represent unified thinking from either the practitioners or professors of that field.

Eight characteristics were identified that are prevalent in the discussions of the profession or that appeared in some state's certification regulation. For example, the Association of School Business Officers (ASBO) has recently advocated for a certificate or endorsement specific to school business officer and separate from the superintendent's credential. Only one state, Massachusetts, provides such a certificate. It is the same state that provides the largest number of different certificates/endorsements for school administration, and the only state

Table 2
Specific Characteristics for
School Administration Credentials in Six States

2 yrs + tchng exp. or equiv.	school bus. officer, separate	state app. prep program	supt. & princ. separate endorse.	gradated cert./ endorse.	test	field exp: pract./ intern	#specified areas/levels for cert. or endorsement
CA (1) Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	1
NV Y	N	NR	Y	Y	N	N	6
KA Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	2
NE Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	4
GA Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	8
MA Y	Y	Y	Y	NR	N	Y	9

NR = Not reported

(1) From the summary statement, it appears that there is but a single administrative credential.

demanding a clock-hour internship/practicum -- a feature currently in wide acclaim among both professors and practitioners. One of the six states, Georgia, demands a paper and pencil test as part of the evidence for a completed certificate application. There is also variation in the characteristic of the gradated certification, but the prevalent practice is to grant a first, an initial certificate for a specified term and to demand verifiable successful work and some additional academic accomplishment prior to issuing a second, a higher level certificate. Another prevalent practice among the six was to provide for approved program arrangements,

authorized by some legal entity of the state. On only one characteristic was there unanimity. All six states call for at least two years of successful classroom teaching experience or its clear equivalence.

Observations

Comparison of the data displayed in the two tables indicates several things:

1. Among the states there is substantial diversity in regulating the issue of who can administer in a school and what should be the span of responsibility indicated by a certificate.

2. There is strong agreement among graduate students, professors, and state regulations that state controlled approved program systems provide the best academic arrangement for preparing school administrators.

3. State diversity represents strong local control. For graduate students and professors there was divisiveness, as a sentiment for national control was voiced by the students.

4. Strong legal control of professional certification, evident in every state, is at variance with the sentiment of the professors and graduate students, who would like to see much more control vested in the professional educators, themselves.

Astute readers will pick up on several other aspects of discoordination. Coupled with the advocacy reports of such groups as the National Policy Board for Educational Administration, the uncertainties in designing a best pattern from which to develop educational administrators points more and more toward perceptual instability within the professional group. Some efforts are modeled after other professions who are not in public employment. Some are modeled after work groups that may be in public employment but are on the downside from being called a profession.

Earlier in this paper, there was a call for the application of wisdom and that linked to, or superordinate to, research data. It is the contention of this author that the profession of educational administration

may find its best route to a unified improvement by way of increasing reflective thought and analysis of the work, coupled with the recognition of real-life politics that makes negotiation and compromise an absolutely essential part of that development.

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Appendix A

A Questionnaire:
Policy Questions on
Certification for Professional Educators

Increasingly, policy questions focused upon the certification/licensure of professional educators are being discussed. Different concepts of preparation and adequacy are being explored. This questionnaire is devoted to only a few of the concepts.

In completing this questionnaire, indicate by circling the point of your considered agreement/disagreement. (Note: Teacher certification is a generic term, including all persons in the educational enterprise who must have a certificate.)

	Strong Agreement 5	4	3	2	Strong Disagreement 1
1. The present system of certification in Nebraska (an approved program system), based upon cooperation between colleges of education and the state department of education, is an excellent program for preparing teachers.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Teachers should be in charge of teacher certification.	5	4	3	2	1
3. State (legal) agencies should be in charge of teacher certification.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Teacher certification should be attached to supply and demand. That is, when teachers are in short supply, entry standards should be reduced so that there can be a "teacher" in every classroom.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Teachers are worthy of the public trust to police their own group.	5	4	3	2	1
6. Teachers are, for example and in comparison, as trustworthy as are lawyers (who police their own group).	5	4	3	2	1
7. Certification should be by a national board, with that certificate valid in every state.	5	4	3	2	1
8. National certification should be issued only after successful completion of a national teacher examination.	5	4	3	2	1

	Strong Agreement 5	4	3	2	Strong Disagreement 1
9. Teacher salaries should be linked to scores on a teacher certification examination; i.e., the better the score, the higher the salary.	5	4	3	2	1
10. The National Science Teachers Association (for example) should be the agency to identify and certificate persons qualified to teach science.	5	4	3	2	1

Comments: Choosing only one item from this questionnaire, give the rationale for making your choice as in agreement or disagreement.

I have _____ years experience as a teacher; _____ as an administrator.